

FAQs: Absentee Voting 101

Q. For how many elections has the online ballot system been available?

A. Since September 2012.

Q. Could you please explain further what you mean by “ballots are not counted until after polls close” for processing absentee ballots?

A. Ballots not marked “to be rejected” can be processed, assigned voter numbers and placed in the voting equipment, but the equipment won’t count or tabulate the ballots until after the polls close at 8:00 pm.

Q. Do emailed ballots require the clerk’s or deputy clerk’s initials?

A. Yes. We will be posting separate guidance on emailing and faxing ballots with suggestions about how to do so.

Q. For permanent overseas/military absentee voters that made requests to receive online ballots before MyVote 2.0 was set up, do they need to be contacted and told that they need to set that up themselves in MyVote, or will they already be set up this way?

A. All requests were seamlessly migrated to the updated MyVote system.

Q. A former Wisconsin resident has 24 months to vote a presidential-only absentee ballot?

A. A former Wisconsin resident is eligible to request and receive a presidential-only ballot only within 24 months of moving from Wisconsin.

Q. Why would the voter not register in their new state?

A. Other states may have longer residency requirements. Wisconsin law allows a former resident to, within 24 months of moving out of Wisconsin, vote a Presidential-only ballot (if there is a presidential election during that time).

Q. With a faxed or e-mailed ballot, what should we use for the signatures of voter and witness? How is that returned? Inside of the envelope?

A. You include a copy of the certification side of the certificate envelope. The voter will vote the ballot in the presence of a witness, and seal the ballot in a plain envelope. The voter will complete the certificate, sign it and have it properly witnessed. The voter will affix the certificate to envelope containing the ballot (thereby making their own certificate envelope) and place the envelope containing the ballot into another larger envelope addressed to the clerk’s office. The voter must pay for the return postage for ballots faxed or emailed.

Q. Have you created a revised uniform letter to include with the absentee ballots?

A. Yes, it has been posted: <http://www.gab.wi.gov/forms/voters-uniform%20instructions>.

Q. On the Thursday and Friday before the election, must the office remain open until 5:00 pm or can the in-person absentee voting and registration be within the official office hours?

A. You set the absentee hours, but the Friday before the election has a number of other deadlines,

including in-person voter registration, application for an absentee ballot by indefinitely confined voters and application for an absentee ballot by military voters who are not away from home.

Q. When can I listen to this webinar again?

A. It has been posted: <http://www.gab.wi.gov/clerks/education-training/webinars>.

Q. If an elector checks the box for “my return is not certain” we treat them as a permanent overseas voter, correct?

A. Correct.

Q. If they say they want the online option, they have to enter the request at MyVote, correct? The clerk’s office doesn’t enter it for them as an online absentee?

A. Yes, it is a voter- initiated process. The municipal clerk does not enter the request for them.

Q. If a husband or wife is the witness, and they didn’t fill in the address section of the witness signature, are we able to fill in this section?

A. This early before the election, contact the voters. There is enough time for the voters to come in and fix their certificate envelopes or they can spoil their ballots and you can send them new ones.

Q. What is the procedure if we receive an absentee ballot in the mail well before the election and the envelope is missing a witness signature? Do I return the envelope to get correct or spoil it and issue a new absentee ballot?

A. See above.

Q. The calendar of events states that military electors have until 5:00pm on Election Day to request a ballot. If they have to return it by mail, how is that done?

A. The deadline for a Military – away request has not changed, but it is unlikely that it will be returned in time since there is not option any longer for late-arriving absentee ballots to be counted by 4 pm the Friday after the election.

Q. When we witness in-office do we need to write the municipality?

A. Yes, you must list the address of the municipality.

Q. On the emailed or faxed ballot, won’t they need to be remade on a regular ballot so that the machine can read it?

A. Yes.

Q. I have a temporary overseas voter looking for an e-mail ballot. Where will I get that e-mail version of the ballot and is a temporary overseas voter or any other voter eligible for an e-mail ballot now?

A. Instructions will be posted soon. You will need to either scan and e-mail the ballot or use a pdf version supplied by your county clerk.

Any voter may request that their ballot be faxed or emailed. A request for a faxed or emailed ballot from a military or permanent overseas voter must be honored. Is it up to the clerk whether to

accommodate a request for a faxed or emailed ballot from any other voter, but the WEC recommends the clerk honor the request, if at all possible.

Q. Can you put two absentee ballots with certificate envelopes when mailing to two people in the same household?

A. We advise not doing so.

Q. How is a care facility indefinitely confined person different from an SVD served voter?

A. Not all residents of a residential care facility or retirement home are categorized as indefinitely confined voters. An indefinitely confined voter indicates their status as such in section 6 of the absentee ballot application.

Q. Specifically in regards to having to complete a request each year?

A. Indefinitely confined voters receive ballots until they don't return one for an April, November or special election. Residents of care facilities who are not indefinitely confined voters - whether served by SVDs or not - can make specific election requests or calendar year requests.

Q. What time on Saturday is the deadline?

A. Saturday midnight.

Q. Can you keep the same absentee voting times as before the restriction was lifted?

A. Yes.

Q. Have the military envelopes changed as well?

A. All of the envelopes (EL-120, EL-120m, EL-122 and EL-122m) have all changed. Per the USPS, the Election Mail Logo has been positioned differently and is a different size.

Q. When can I start in-person absentee voting?

A. When ballots are available.

Q. Can we insert ballots into M100s before the polls close?

A. Yes.

Q. If someone who is indefinitely confined does not return a ballot for any election, can I remove them from receiving ballots in the future?

A. Only if they don't return a ballot for an April, November or special election. If they don't return a ballot for one of those elections, send them a notice and they have 30 days to contact you to be kept on the absentee list.

Q. Can anyone request an online ballot, or just Military and Permanent Overseas voters?

A. Only permanent overseas and military voters can request to receive their ballot online through the MyVote Wisconsin system. Regular absentee voters can request a ballot via email or fax due to the recent court decision.

Q. Can we ask voters to request their ballot through WisVote?

A. You can give them information about WisVote but you cannot require military or permanent overseas voters to request a ballot through the website, unless they want their ballot delivered online.

Q. In viewing the new uniform instructions I noted they are much longer now due to cover new changes, etc. Is this the form we should now send to absentee voters and post on our websites?

A. Yes, we combined the instructions for regular absentee voters, military voters and permanent overseas voters into one document.

Q. For faxing and emailing the ballot, please review the various documents that must accompany the ballot, such as certificate envelope language to sign, instructions for voting absentee ballot, etc. A.

There will be detailed information forthcoming on faxing and emailing ballots.

Q. Can in person voting occur on the weekends, including the weekend before Election Day?

A. Yes. The only black out day is the day before the election.

Q. Will USPS kick those back as well if the logo is not properly located?

A. The USPS says it is possible.

Q. Can you issue absentee ballot numbers on Election Day prior to the polls opening?

A. Some clerks pre-number their absentee ballots. We don't recommend it, but there is nothing prohibiting them from doing so.

Q. If a new WI resident cannot provide proof of residence; do they not get a ballot?

A. That's correct.

Q. Is it required to put stamps on the return ballot?

A. You can use stamps, or a meter, or other BRM offered by the USPS.

Q. Could the ballot be placed in the auxiliary bin with any other ballot which could not be read by the DS 200 for whatever reason and will be remade at the end of the day?

A. Yes.

Q. What if a (former Wisconsin resident voting a presidential only absentee) voter does not have a valid WI License for proof of ID?

A. A WI DL is not the only acceptable form of ID. How about a passport, for example? Plus a WI driver license can be expired since the last general election (Nov 2014) and the address does not need to be current.

Q. Is the Type E notice required to be published? Or can we just post on our website and at the hall?

A. Cities must publish; cities may not post. Towns and Villages that have no newspaper published in their municipality and have not named another area newspaper as their paper for election notices, may post. If you qualify for posting election notices, posting in one public location and your municipal website is sufficient. All notices (A, B, C, D, E) for which municipal clerks are responsible must be noticed in the same manner.

Q. Can you issue absentee ballot numbers without opening the envelopes prior to the polls opening on Election Day and opening them once polls open?

A. You can't open the envelope prior to Election Day, so you would write the voter number in a corner of the envelope and then process the absentee ballot the usual way on Election Day.

Q. What if a Clerk does not have a scanner? Is their only option by fax then?

A. You could also work with your county clerk or another municipal clerk with a scanner, if available.

Q. Do any military absentee requests received on Saturday have to go out on Saturday?

A. For the Saturday, September 24, 2016 deadline, all by mail requests need to be taken to the post office even if it's not in time for a postmark. Email and fax requests must be sent out on Saturday using the requested delivery method. Are you sure this is right? I thought this only applied to the 45-day deadline; not all Saturdays.

Q. What if we do not get mail delivered on Saturdays?

A. You may receive a request via email or fax. If you don't have office hours on Saturdays, the only deadline you need to adhere to is Saturday, September 24, 2016.

Q. If a new resident has not met the 10 day residency they can only vote a presidential-only ballot? They do NOT go back to former muni residence and vote there?

A. These are voters moving into WI from another state. They don't have another Wisconsin municipality to return to.

Q. Where are the FAQs posted?

A. They will be posted with the webcast once completed: <http://www.gab.wi.gov/clerks/education-training/webinars>.